

THE NEW ZEALAND BRAVERY MEDAL (N.Z.B.M.)

Dion Wayne PALMER

Staff Sergeant, Royal New Zealand Army Education Corps

Date of action: 17 January 2004

Date of award: 14 October 2006

Citation

On the afternoon of 17 January 2004 Staff Sergeant Palmer and his family were visiting Himatangi Beach. At about 2.30 p.m., he heard calls for help and saw a young boy and an adult male in difficulties about 50 metres off-shore and about one kilometre south of the flagged area of the beach. Despite a strong undertow, and at considerable risk to himself, he swam about 150 metres before reaching the pair. As both the man and the boy, who was 7 years old, appeared calm, Staff Sergeant Palmer took hold of the boy and began swimming with him back to shore, assuming that the man would follow. Having safely reached the beach with the boy, he discovered that the man had disappeared among the large waves. At this stage, local lifeguards appeared on the scene. Although he was exhausted by his earlier swim in very difficult conditions, he assisted the lifeguards on their safety boat in an unsuccessful attempt to find the man.

A Police investigation into the tragedy states that, had it not been for Staff Sergeant Palmer's prompt action and in putting his own life at risk, two people would have lost their lives.